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ABSTRACT

The advent of advisory councils presents a promising opportunity for schools to maximize a largely untapped resource for increased educational effectiveness. This modular training guide, which supplements "Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook," shows practitioners how to set the context for and apply the consensus decision-making method to support and guide their advisory councils. In part I, school advisory councils are defined as broadly constituted bodies designed to give communities an opportunity to contribute to school development. Both educators and community members can maximize this opportunity by learning how to develop a shared purpose, understanding the stages of school council development, and learning to apply consensus decision making. Part II, which discusses the context for consensus decision making, contains tips on preparing for the first school council meeting, a first meeting exercise, and a review of councils' developmental stages. Part III outlines five steps to consensus decision making; part IV presents a simulation for exchanging contention for consensus. Part V discusses value differences that can block agreement, and part VI (Afterword) comments on the importance of learning maximization, as opposed to risk minimization. Two appendices list relevant resources and describe the Quality Schools Project. (MLH)

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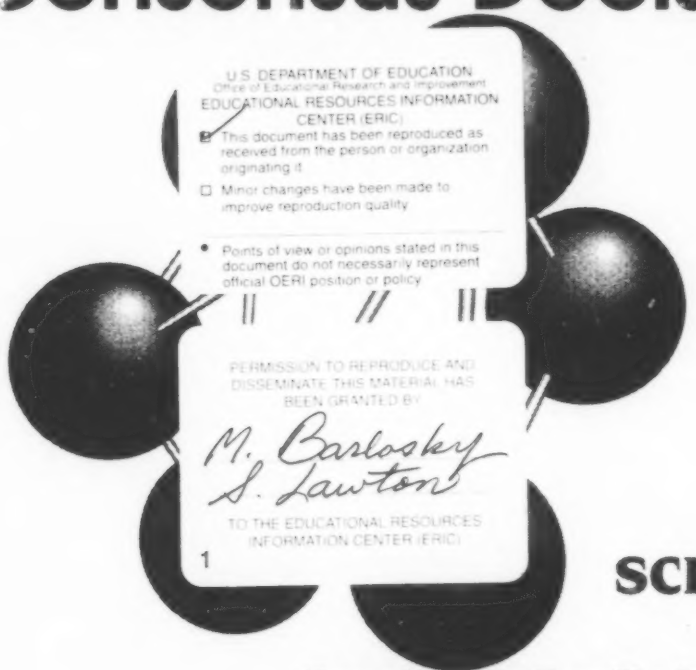
School Advisory Councils & Consensus Decision-Making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Making It Work—

THE QUALITY SCHOOLS APPROACH

Developing Quality Schools: Learning Module #1

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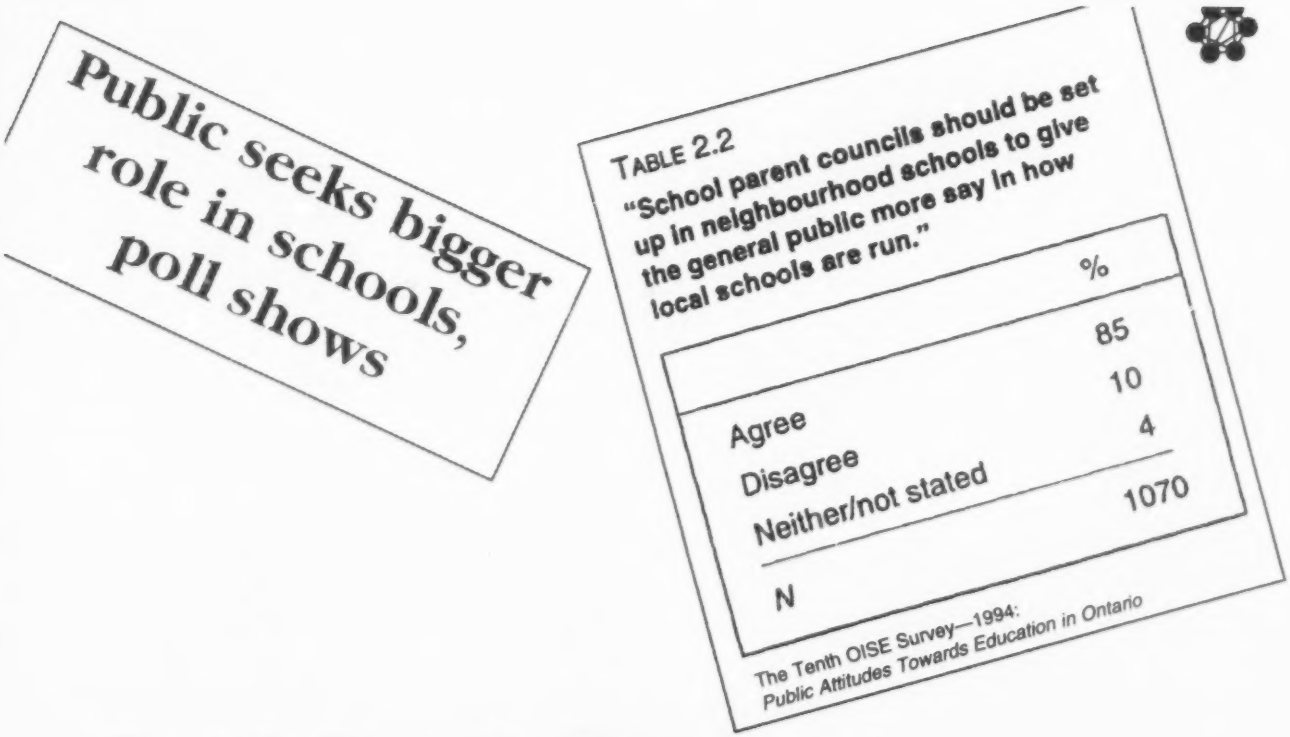
Note: Throughout this learning module page references for related materials in *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook* are provided in square brackets. For example, "[*Handbook*: 118-127]" designates pages 118-127 in the *Handbook*. Additional material on the topic being discussed may be found by making use of these references.



Part I: The Challenge — Making School Advisory Councils Work

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Clearly the time for school advisory councils has arrived. The usefulness of broadly constituted councils to advise and assist in the development of schools has been widely recognized by educators, citizens and governments. In the United States and Canada, schools concerned with utilizing the knowledge and resources present in their communities have instituted advisory councils composed of: parents, students, and representatives of community groups, businesses, municipal governments, and service providers.

The advent of advisory councils presents a very real opportunity for schools to maximize a largely untapped resource for increased educational effectiveness. But this maximization can only occur if trustees, directors of education, superintendents, principals, vice-principals, teachers, and school staff are prepared to build supportive and constructive relationships with their advisory councils. Similarly, advisory council participants will require preparation to ensure that their involvements are productive and that they lead to genuine school improvement.

This modular training guide, which supplements the publication *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook*, tells you how to set the context for and how to apply the consensus decision-making method to support and guide your advisory council. It makes only one assumption: that educators and community members will share a common interest in making their schools *Quality Schools*.

[*Handbook*: x]

What are school advisory councils?

School advisory councils are broadly constituted bodies designed to give communities an opportunity to contribute to the development of their schools. The report of the *Ontario Royal Commission on Learning* issued early in 1995 and the Provincial Government of Ontario have both endorsed the concept of advisory councils and have provided guidelines for their constitution and function.

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The School-Community Council

From *For the Love of Learning*: Recommendations from the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning

108. That the Ministry of Education and Training mandate that each school in Ontario establish a school-community council, with membership drawn from the following sectors:

- parents
- students (from Grade 7 on)
- teachers
- representatives from local religious and ethnic communities
- service providers (government and non-government)
- municipal government(s)
- service clubs and organizations
- business sectors;

109. That each school principal devise an action plan for the establishment and implementation of the school-community council;

110. That school boards provide support to principals to establish and maintain school-community councils and that the boards monitor the councils' progress and indicate the progress in their annual reports.

School Councils in Ontario

From the *Ministry of Education and Training; Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122*

The provincial policy on school councils will require school boards and minority-language sections to develop policies that direct schools in their jurisdictions to begin the establishment of school councils in September 1995, and to ensure that a school council is in place in all schools by June 1996. This memorandum outlines the minimum requirements for the composition and functioning of school councils that must be included in each school board's or section's policy.

School boards are encouraged to involve parents in the development of board policies on school councils.

1. **Membership and Term of Office**

Members of school council shall include, but not be limited to:

- parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school;
- community representatives;
- a student (mandatory in secondary schools; in elementary schools, at the discretion of the principal);
- the school principal;
- a teacher;
- a non-teaching staff member.

Parents and guardians shall form the majority of the council, except in adult day schools, where parent positions shall be held by students. It is expected that the membership of the council will reflect the diversity of the school community...

- the chair of the council shall be a member who is also a parent and shall be elected by the council...

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2. **Roles and Responsibilities of the School Councils**

School councils are advisory bodies. A school council will provide advice to the school principal and, where appropriate, to the school board on any of the matters listed below that the council has identified as priorities:

- local school-year calendar
- school code of student behaviour
- curriculum and program goals and priorities
- the responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs
- preparation of the school profile
- selection of principals
- school budget priorities, including local capital-improvement plans
- school-community communication strategies
- methods of reporting to parents and the community
- extracurricular activities in the school
- school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutrition programs
- community use of school facilities
- local co-ordination of services for children and youth
- development, implementation, and review of board policies at the local level

The provincial policy will require that a school board's policy direct the school principal and, where relevant, senior staff and trustees of the board to seek advice from the school council as part of the process of making decisions with regard to the matters listed above.

In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the school council shall:

- establish its goals, priorities, and procedures;
- organize information and training sessions to enable members of the council to develop their skills as council members;
- hold a minimum of four meetings per year (all meetings shall be open to members of the school community);
- communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the council, and to report on the activities of the council to the school community;
- promote the best interests of the school community.

The Movement to School Advisory Councils

Other jurisdictions have passed legislation specifically concerning councils. Still others have offered general guidelines about how school advisory councils should be composed and the nature of their roles in school improvement. In the following materials, we shall concentrate on how to make school advisory councils work so that participants can achieve success and so that our educational system may gain the most from school council efforts.

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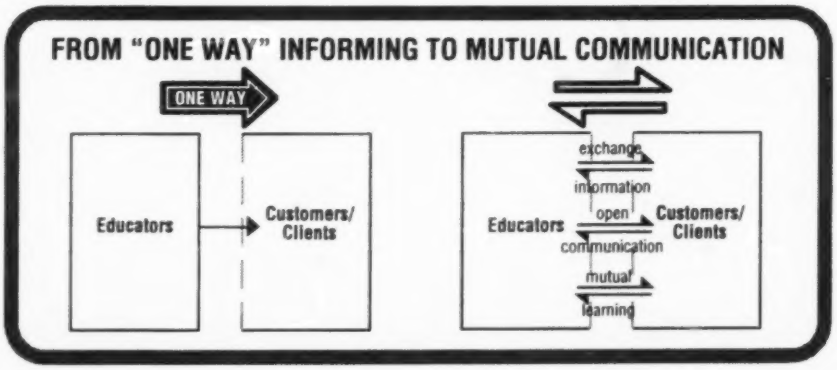
What are the implications of advisory councils for educators and community members?

The challenge posed by advisory councils to educators involves a change from *one-way informing* directed at the customers or clients of educational services to *mutual communication.*

While this challenge will require a re-thinking of the ways things are now done, it opens a path to educational improvement that can meet and exceed the needs of our communities and our constituents.



For educators, advisory councils provide a means through which these needs may be heard. For members of the community, they provide a voice through which their needs may be constructively spoken. Advisory councils, then, provide a common forum through which educators and community members can work together to secure continuous educational improvement.

The purpose of this guide is to help both groups maximize the opportunity school advisory councils present by:

1. learning how to develop a sense of shared purpose,
2. understanding the stages of school council development,
3. learning how to apply consensus decision-making.

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Part II: The Context for Consensus Decision-Making — Shared Purpose and the Stages of School Advisory Council Development

The success of consensus decision-making is related to a group's sense of shared purpose and to its internal dynamics. Taken together, these two factors define what is possible for a group to accomplish at a given time.

While a group's sense of shared purpose can increase acceptance of difference, a knowledge of the stages through which groups pass will result in increased perspective and patience. When patience and purposefulness are combined, advisory councils can create an environment that supports consensus-making while remaining attentive to and comfortable with difference.

This section contains:

1. Tips on preparing for the first school council meeting,
2. A first meeting exercise, and
3. A review of the stages through which councils will pass as they develop.

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Getting to the First School Advisory Council Meeting — Preparing the Way

It is important how members of the school advisory council get to their first meeting. Preparation for the first meeting is important, as this meeting will set the tone for all future council sessions. With this in mind, we offer the following advice. In advance of the first meeting:

1. councillors should receive an information package designed by the convening school (this package might include: a list of who will be present, brief backgrounds on other council members, the agenda, relevant information materials),
2. councillors should be clearly notified of the time, place, and expected duration of the first meeting,
3. the agenda should be planned to allow sufficient time for councillors to meet and talk informally in a convivial environment,
4. the agenda should include a time for introductions for and/or by each council member (such introductions may include a brief statement of the experiential resources each member brings to the council and what he/she hopes to accomplish by participating),
5. the Chair or Convener should be prepared to discuss the formal mandate of the school advisory council, and
6. time should be provided for the council to collaboratively build an agenda for the next meeting and to set a date, time (beginning *and* end time), and location for it.

If a Chair is to be selected, the council should decide if they wish to do this at the outset of the meeting or if they wish to allow the Convener to lead the meeting until they are prepared to select a permanent Chair.

Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook provides material about team building and ideas about how to prepare for the first council meeting [*Handbook*: 85-133; especially 103-104].

Setting the Stage for Consensus — A First Meeting Exercise

We suggest that the agenda for the first school advisory council should include the completion and the discussion of the following group exercise.

The exercise is divided into three individual tasks which are followed by discussion. Allow sufficient time for council members to think about the tasks and to put their thoughts concisely into words. As a guideline, at least ten minutes should be allotted for the completion of each of the three tasks, which should also be completed by the Convener or Chair.

1. The Convener or Chair should begin the exercise by inviting members to write a few concise sentences on what they would like to accomplish through their council participation.
2. Next, invite members to write their thoughts on how they think the council can best work together to reach its goals. For the purposes of this exercise, these

should be general thoughts rather than specific operating procedures. Responses might be directed to questions like, "What kinds of things should we do and how should we do them in order to accomplish our council's goals?," or, "What will it take to achieve our shared purposes?"

3. Then invite the members to write what they expect of the others (for example: attitude, work, commitment) who will be working with them as fellow councillors.

When sufficient time has been allowed for the completion of the three tasks, an open discussion of each should be held. The Convenor or Chair should make sure that all councillors have a chance to contribute to the discussion. A useful model for conducting the discussion can be found in the sections on "Brainstorming" and "Affinity Networks" in *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook* [*Handbook* 119-123]. The discussion should lead to a listing of:

1. the purposes the council will seek to satisfy and the goals it will seek to reach,
2. how the council sees itself satisfying its purposes and reaching its goals, and
3. what councillors expect of each other as they work purposefully together.

There is no press to achieve uniformity in any of the three areas. The point is to "surface" and to acknowledge individual perspectives that the council can build upon as it articulates its mission and undertakes its work.

Record the discussion on flip charts entering comments under each of the three headings. Take the time to make sure that recorded comments accurately reflect the members' views. If it is agreeable, the Convener or Chair should collect the members' written comments. The words prepared by participants and the notes from their discussion can be the first step to establishing the shared purpose and shared working arrangements essential to council success.

Stages of Development

In his work on group development, Bruce Tuckman* defined four stages through which all groups, committees, and councils pass. These are: FORMING, STORMING, NORMING, and PERFORMING. Stephen Murgatroyd and Colin Morgan* have added a fifth stage: TRANSFORMING. These stages are covered in detail in the *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook* [*Handbook* 101-115] and they are presented in the graphic on the next page.

*The first four stages were first stated by Bruce Tuckman in his article "Developmental Sequences in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin*, 63(6): 384-399. The final stage and the format of the accompanying graphic were developed by Stephen Murgatroyd and Colin Morgan in their book *Total Quality Management and the School*, Open University Press, U.K.

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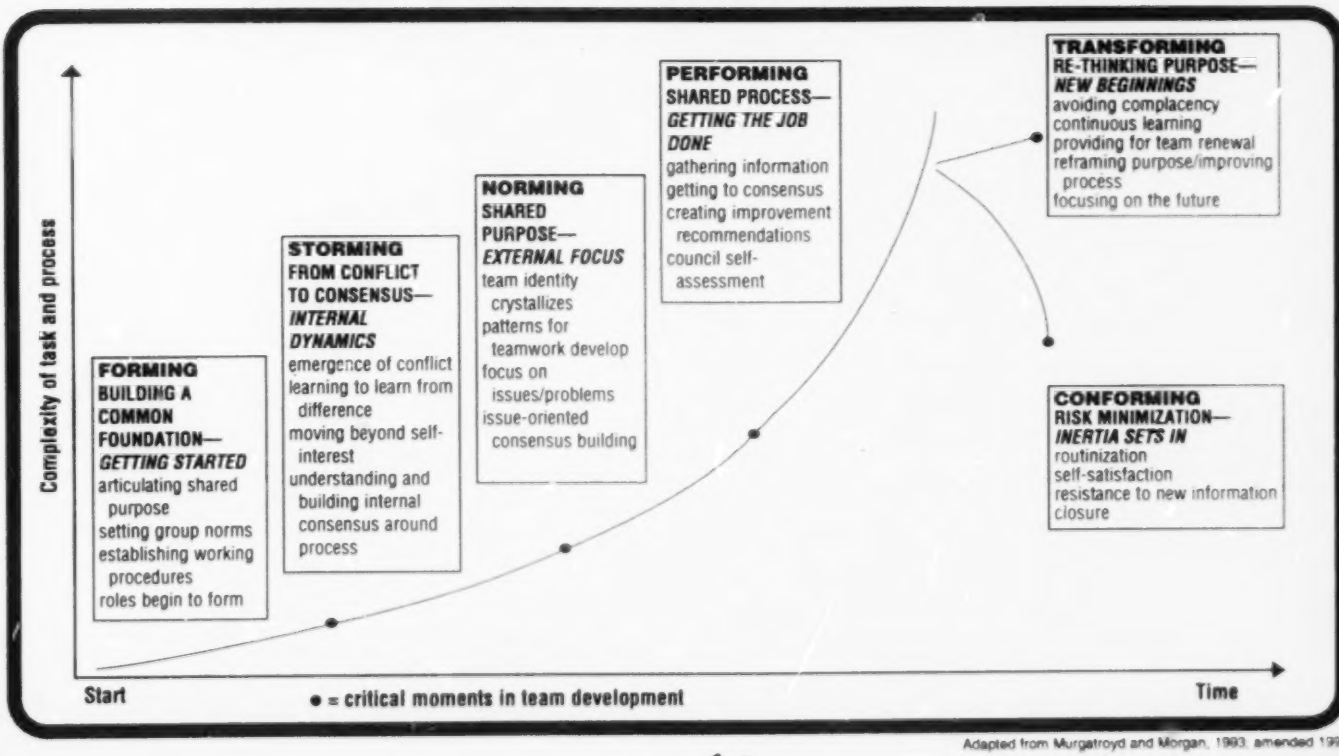
STAGES OF SCHOOL COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT



Adapted from Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993, amended 19

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While all advisory councils can expect to pass through these developmental stages, the path is not linear and it is not one way. And no two councils will follow the same development path. Councils may appear to "jump" a stage only to return to it at a later time. They may also move backwards or become stuck in a given stage.

Despite variation among councils and an element of unpredictability, the five stages form a useful background for determining how a council is progressing. When a council becomes stuck in a given stage or begins to regress, it will be important to take stock and to re-think what may need to be done. At such times, outside advice and/or training may be needed to get things moving again.

While consensus decision-making should be introduced in the forming stage, it is most pertinent when groups begin to storm or disagree. We suggest that, when used properly, consensus decision-making, discussed in Part III, can be the procedural bridge from storming to the norming, performing, and transforming stages of council development.

Shared Process, Shared Purpose

Council difficulties can be lessened significantly by assiduously cultivating a shared sense of purpose. W. Edwards Demings' *14 Points* [*Handbook*: 6-9], which are the basis of *Quality School* improvements, intentionally begin with the creation of *constancy of purpose*. Without this sense of shared purpose the workings of any organization or group will fail to be productive.

And, shared purpose should not be taken for granted. Like the method of consensus decision-making, it will not happen by itself. Rather, it needs to be attended to carefully. It is a topic that should be revisited continuously as the council takes on tasks and tracks its performance.

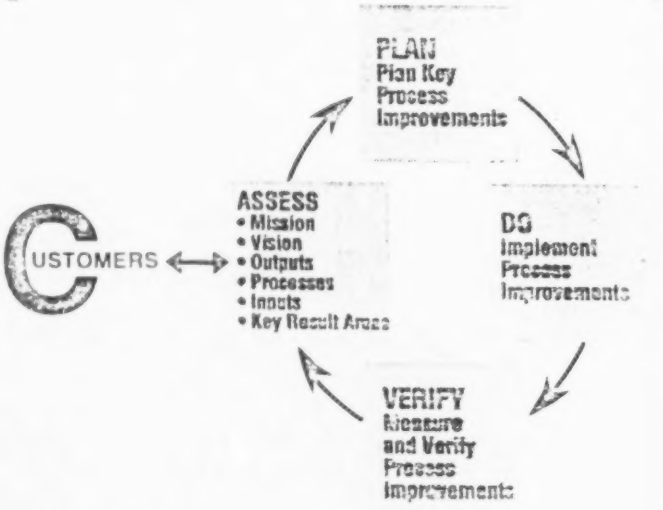
In its forming stage, the council may find it helpful to draft a concise and "cliche-free" mission or statement of purpose [*Handbook*: 35-38]. This statement, which may grow basically from the first meeting exercise we have included above, should incorporate specific goals that can provide orientation for council discussions. While the statement will be a means to ensure constancy of shared purpose, it may be periodically revised to reflect the council's proven capabilities and developing interests.

The second chapter of the *Quality Schools Handbook* has several exercises for developing a shared sense of organizational purpose and process [*Handbook*: 47-84]. These exercises may be used in the forming stage of school councils to develop a shared view of the school and school system, as well as a shared understanding of the function and goals of the advisory council itself. Completion of these exercises will facilitate the council in forming its statement of purpose, which will both guide its actions and serve as an internal benchmark for self-assessment.

An overview of the ideal process that characterizes both the workings of schools and their advisory councils is provided by Kodak Canada Inc.'s *Quality Leadership Process*. Driven by customer or client needs, the cycle moves from *Assessment* to *Planning* to *Doing* to *Verifying*, and then begins again. As you can see from the illustration to the right, the work of both the school and the advisory council should begin and end with a customer-focused purpose.

Establishing and maintaining constancy of purpose creates a positive context for consensus decision-making and guards against the potential fractiousness of disagreements.

QUALITY LEADERSHIP PROCESS
For Continuous Improvement



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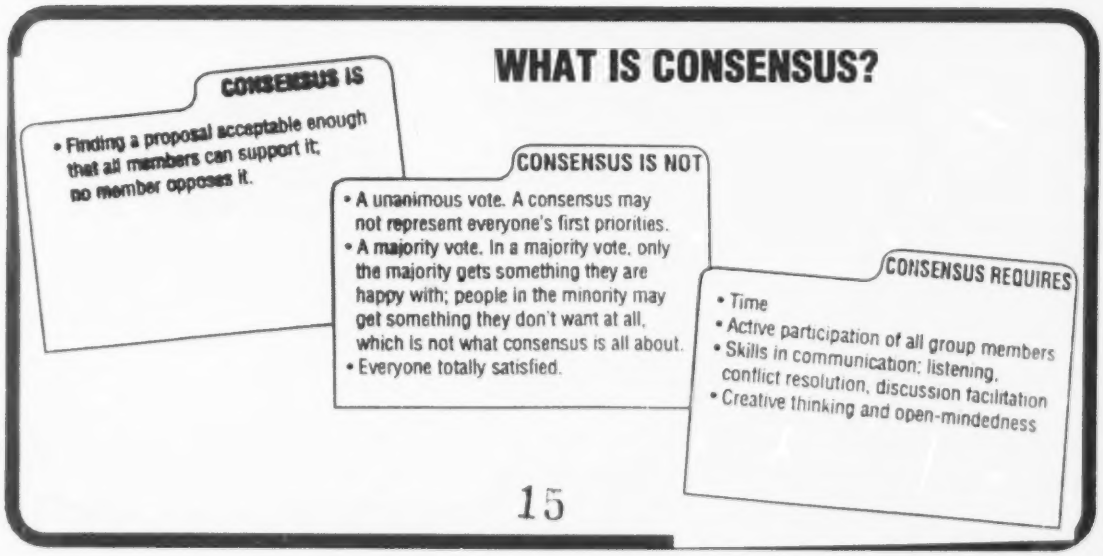
Part III: The Process — Consensus and the Five Steps to Consensus Decision-Making


WHAT IS CONSENSUS?
CONSENSUS IS
• Finding a proposal acceptable enough that all members can support it; no member opposes it.
CONSENSUS IS NOT
• A unanimous vote. A consensus may not represent everyone's first priorities.
• A majority vote. In a majority vote, only the majority gets something they are happy with; people in the minority may get something they don't want at all, which is not what consensus is all about.
• Everyone totally satisfied.
CONSENSUS REQUIRES
• Time
• Active participation of all group members
• Skills in communication: listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation
• Creative thinking and open-mindedness
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Adapted from *The Team Handbook* © 1988 Joiner Associates Inc. Used with permission

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What is Consensus Decision-Making?

Consensus decision-making is a process through which groups, committees, and councils consisting of members with different backgrounds and diverse value orientations can maximize the possibility of achieving functional agreement. It is a method for securing consensus from difference and for advancing educational improvement.

But, consensus decision-making will not happen by itself. It is not a natural process and to many it will be unfamiliar. It is a learned method of working together to achieve shared goals.

To work, consensus decision-making requires:

ORIENTATION
TRAINING
PRACTICE, and a
SHARED COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.

In this section the consensus decision-making process is described. In the following section, a simulation is presented through which you can gain experience in the consensus decision-making process. The simulation in Part IV is followed by a set of discussion questions and suggestions about potential uses of the simulation.

Getting to Consensus

5 Steps for Consensus Decision-Making

When using the consensus decision-making process, consensus is sought at each step. When consensus is reached the issue being discussed is considered resolved. The exact phrasing of the consensus resolution should be carefully recorded and read back to the council for affirmation.

Rather than determining resolution through a majority vote, consensus results when everyone reaches an acceptable comfort level with what is being proposed. In place of a motion carrying with the votes of one half plus one of those present, *consensus exists when all present can support or accept what is proposed with no one standing in opposition.*

Step 1. Conducting the Discussion — Ensuring Input and Managing Time

The Chair of the council must ensure that everyone is asked for their input. On any given issue, members should have at least two chances to express their views and to input information.

To ensure that things keep moving and that there is time for everyone to speak, it will be helpful to set guidelines for individual speaking times and for the total time to be devoted to a given issue. Individual speaking times may be permanently set or they may be set in regard to the issue being discussed (i.e., a difficult issue may merit more time per speaker). Total time to be devoted to an issue can be decided when assembling the agenda for the next meeting. It may also be the first step of each meeting.

The task of balancing the need for equal input with reasonable time frames for discussion and meetings is important and needs everyone's cooperation.

Step 2. Reviewing the Discussion

After the discussion is complete, the Chair should go around the table and ask each member to give their sense of what they have heard from the group. The Chair should speak last after ensuring that everyone has had their turn.

This step may, in itself, lead to consensus. If it does not, the points of difference should be clarified. By giving voice to their sense of the discussion, each member will have an opportunity to explore how consensus might be reached and to get a better perspective on the obstacles that are preventing it. Everyone should stay alert to potential paths to consensus.

Step 3. Agreeing on Principle or Higher Purpose
If consensus is not reached, the Chair should seek agreement on the higher purpose or general principle around which consensus might be gained. For example, an issue concerning "bullying" might lead to a discussion of the principle of student safety as a prerequisite to learning. In developing points of principle or higher purpose, follow the same discussion process detailed in Steps 1 and 2.

While agreement on specifics is often elusive, agreement on a point of principle is usually possible. There are a number of fundamental things we all agree upon (e.g., schools should facilitate learning, schools should be safe, schools should meet the needs of students). By moving the discussion to broader areas of agreement, the Chair may develop the foundations for mutual understanding, if not for immediate consensus.

When agreement is reached on the point of principle, explore how the initial topic can be made to conform to it. The Chair should invite each member's comments on this matter. It may be helpful to remind council members that the purpose of discussion is to reach consensus.

Step 4. Agreeing on a Test that Would Decide the Issue
When agreement is reached on the higher purpose or principle involved, but there is still disagreement about the specific topic, the Chair should move the discussion to how a test could be constructed to determine when the initial topic would conform to the agreed-upon principle.

The discussion should address how you would know if the matter under discussion satisfies the accepted principle. Invite council members to comment on how the issue of initial discussion might be made to fit test criteria. Then "build back" from the test criteria to determine if you have moved towards consensus on how the topic might be phrased for resolution. For example, if you decide on an acceptable test for the principle of school safety, explore how the issue of bullying might be settled by it.

Again, the Chair should follow the procedure for discussion detailed in Steps 1 and 2, to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Step 5. The "Last Resort" — An Option for Closure

The "Last Resort" is just that. It is the least preferred fall-back option to ensure that the council moves forward with its business. In practice it will seldom be used, but it provides important insurance and incentive. The last resort option is both a motive to reach consensus and a guarantee that the council will not be mired in unresolved and unending debate. Its use takes seriously the value of the council's time and the importance of its work.

A. Establish in advance of each meeting one member of the council whose responsibility is to provide the decision if the group does not reach consensus. This duty may be permanently assigned or the responsibility may be rotated.

B. If the group is unable to reach consensus, ask the designated "last resort" for his/her decision which will be adopted if the group does not agree. *The last resort's decision is <u>not</u> a matter for discussion or debate.* Then try once again to reach consensus. Again, follow the procedures for discussion detailed in Steps 1 and 2.

C. If the council cannot reach consensus, the decision of the designated "last resort" is deemed adopted.

Note: Rather than being terminal, the decision of the "last resort" can address the need to secure additional information before the matter is resolved. This may mean deferring the discussion, especially if the issue of principle or higher purpose involves a reformulation of the initial topic that *legitimately* calls for additional thought or preparation by council members. *If the option to defer is used, it is used only <u>once</u>.*

If the last resort option is to become part of council practice, it is best introduced after a sense of shared purpose has been reached. Remember, it is a means to *advance* rather than to bypass the shared purpose needed to make the council truly effective.

Part IV: Getting to Consensus — A Simulation & Discussion

The following simulation can be used as an exercise in an early session of your school advisory council. It will give council members a chance to "try on" the principles of consensus decision-making in a low risk situation. In addition to providing an opportunity for team members to learn about each other and council dynamics, it can be the starting point for a useful discussion of how the council will proceed with its work.

School Advisory Council Simulation: From Contention to Consensus

Instructions:
Role-play an advisory council meeting to seek consensus on the contentious issue described below. In the simulation, the meeting is to be chaired in accordance with the consensus decision-making model. Identify with your role and the situation. Assume that all members understand and accept the purpose of the council to work together to provide advice useful for school development.

Prior to meeting as a council, each member has been given written material concerning the consensus decision-making process. The Chair may wish to begin the meeting by reviewing this process with the council members and to collaboratively select a last resort.

The Setting:
The setting is the third meeting of the *Ambivalent Middle School Advisory Council,* which was newly established in this school year. The eight members of the council have come to know each other and have established the rudiments of working relationships. The "getting-to-know-you" or "forming" period is now over and matters that need tough choices are on the horizon.

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The Issue:

In a previous meeting the Ambivalent Middle School's modest offering of computer courses was attributed to a shortage of money, space, and staff resources. A member of the advisory council, who holds a management position at the internationally prestigious firm Opticon Computers Inc., arrives with "good news." The good news is in the form of a letter addressed to the council and signed by the Director of Educational Partnerships, Opticon Computers. The letter is presented as an item of "old business" needing immediate discussion at the beginning of your current meeting.

The main item on the agenda of new business for today's meeting is what could or should be done to "save" the school's music program. The continuity of the program has been imperiled by recent cuts in funding and staff, and by space shortages. The Opticon letter raises the council's first encounter with a potentially either/or decision. There is anxiety among many and a sense of growing antagonism among some as the letter is read.

The Exercise:

Explore how this situation might be resolved. (*Resolved* does not necessarily mean permanently *solved!*) Make use of the consensus decision-making model presented in the previous section.

The Roles:

1. Chairperson — a parent whose concern is with advancing the after-graduation employment prospects of students
2. Computer Advocate — a parent as well as a high-profile community/industry representative
3. Music Program Advocate — a parent, owner of a local music store, and an active member of the Chamber of Commerce
4. A parent who is a back-to-the-basics doubter of both the computer and the music advocates
5. A parent who is an adamant member of the local ratepayers association ("no new taxes!") and an avid computer "hacker"
6. A parent who has vociferously encouraged school-business partnerships
7. A grade 8 student who is the first violin in the school's orchestra
8. The schools chief custodian whose biggest concern is how to meet increasing custodial demands given recent staffing cuts
9. A teacher who is also the English Coordinator and the school's primary arts advocate
10. The Principal who last year played the formative role in drafting the school's mission statement which says that all school activities are dictated by "the best interests of the students"

OPTICON COMPUTERS

1 February, 1996

School Advisory Committee
Ambivalent Middle School
400 Middle Road Pass
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Members:

I was pleased to learn of your interest in initiating a partnership with Opticon Computers Inc. As you know, establishing partnerships is a corporate priority for Opticon and we have an excellent record in working with schools throughout North America and around the world.

We have four requirements for corporate-school partnerships that would be part of our agreement with Ambivalent Middle School:

1. housing of state-of-the-art computer work stations donated by Opticon Computers Inc. in a designated and properly maintained "Opticon Computer Resource Centre,"

2. the introduction of beginning and advanced course offerings in computer usage and applications, which meet Opticon standards,

3. joint issue of periodic press-releases and media materials describing the partnership, the Centre, and the progress of both, and

4. monitoring of compliance with partnership requirements through on-site visits by Opticon corporate staff.

I understand that at your meeting later this month you will prepare a detailed partnership proposal for submission to Opticon. I look forward to receiving the proposal and I congratulate you on your educational vision.

Yours sincerely,

M. Foucault

M. Foucault

Director of Educational Partnerships

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Learning from the Simulation — Points for Discussion

1. How well was the consensus decision-making model followed? When and why did the chairperson depart from the model? Could the departures be used to improve the model or did they create problems for reaching consensus? If you found process-oriented improvements in the consensus decision-making model, revise it to incorporate them.
2. What, in your view, went *right* in the simulation? What helped the *right* things to happen? What were the obstacles that had to be overcome to make them happen? How were these obstacles overcome?
3. What, in your view, went *wrong* in the simulation? Why did the *wrong* things happen? What might have been done to avoid them?
4. Was the original topic broadened to address a more encompassing principle or higher purpose? If so, how did this occur? What impact did this have on the discussion? Was the discussion moved from principle back to the specific item under discussion? How was this accomplished?
5. What opportunities were realized and what opportunities were missed to maximize learning from differences among council members? When and how did each occur in the course of discussion? How did learning lead to consensus?
6. How can we maximize opportunities for council members to learn from their experiences of agreement *and* difference? Explore how things going "right" may create obstacles to learning. Similarly, explore how things going "wrong" may create opportunities for learning.

Note: An Alternative Way to Make Use of the Simulation

Go through the simulation twice. The first time, have the meeting chaired in accordance with standard rules of order (i.e., call for motions, seconders, discussion, and votes). The second time, introduce the participants to consensus decision-making and have the Chair operate by its procedures.

When both paths through the simulation have been tried, incorporate the discussion questions in a comparison of the two procedural methods.

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Part V. Values, Difference, and Consensus

Values will inevitably be at the centre of the tasks undertaken by advisory councils. This is not surprising given that our values determine much of what we do and how we go about doing it. It is also not surprising that the members of school councils will hold significantly different values. And, as you have seen in the advisory council simulation, differences in values can lead to differences in more overt forms of expression.

But differences in values need not lead to stalemate. Consensus decision-making provides a procedural method for achieving functional agreement without requiring individuals to abandon matters of principle. We may better understand the consensus building process by examining Christopher Hodgkinson's work on values in educational settings.

Hodgkinson's insights into the relationship between values and decision-making can help us lessen the potentially negative impact of value differences upon our ability to work productively in purposeful groups. In developing what he calls the "value paradigm," Hodgkinson presents a taxonomy of the three different levels or types of values at play in any decision-making situation.

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Values at *Level III* represent immediate preferences unqualified by thought or consideration of external circumstances.

Values at *Level I* represent matters of highest principles — the values that we would defend at any cost and which reflect who we are.

THE VALUE PARADIGM

VALUE TYPE	GROUNDS OF VALUE	PSYCHOLOGICAL FACULTY	PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS	VALUE LEVEL
I	PRINCIPLES	conation willing	religion existentialism intuition	I
IIA	CONSEQUENCE (A)	cognition reason	utilitarianism pragmatism humanism	II
IIB	CONSENSUS (B)	thinking	democratic liberalism	
III	PREFERENCE	affect emotion feeling	behaviourism positivism hedonism	III

RIGHT ▲ ▼ GOOD

Adapted from Hodgkinson, *The Philosophy of Leadership*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983

Values at *Level II* reflect two inter-related considerations:

Consensus: concern for others and the need for productive agreement, and

Consequence: concern with the outcome of actions.

In consensus decision-making, *Level I* and *Level III* value differences will block agreement. *Type I* and *Type III* values do not lend themselves to negotiation. To seek consensus at these levels would be unproductive and frustrating.

By moving value-based considerations to *Level II* of the value paradigm, however, we may facilitate the reaching of consensus or functional agreement. In Hodgkinson's terms, the work of moving values from *Levels I* and *III* to *Level II* of the value paradigm is requisite to consensus decision-making. This does not mean that individuals must abandon either principles or passions. It does mean, however, that they must accept reasoned limits to each in order to achieve their shared goals.

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In terms of values, it is important to remember that:

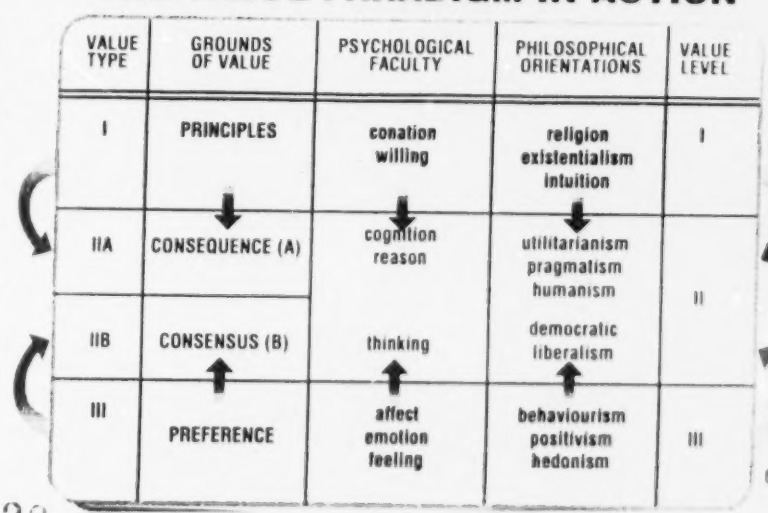
Consensus need not conform completely to an individual's first principles or fundamental *Level I* values. That is, consensus accepts the threshold measure of acceptability recognizing that people who hold different principles can and do work together productively.

Consensus must move beyond the individual preferences of *Level III*. That is, consensus requires more than unqualified self-interest. It requires respectful consideration of the other, and openness to personal learning, change, and accommodation.

Consensus must value the functional agreement needed to achieve purposes defined by *Level II* values. It allows values to be informed by reason in order to reach the functional agreement needed to achieve purposes held in common.

By moving discussions to the second level of the value paradigm, advisory council's may avoid the "dead-locking" that can occur when either simple preferences or deeply held principles are set in opposition. Using the value paradigm as a navigational chart,* advisory councils can complete an essential step in securing the functional agreements that constitute consensus and which must precede effective recommendations for quality improvements.

THE VALUE PARADIGM IN ACTION



Adapted from Hodgkinson, *The Philosophy of Leadership*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983

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Part VI: Afterword — The Importance of Learning

In *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook* [*Handbook* 33 ff.], we discuss the difference between ***risk minimization*** and ***learning maximization***. Organizations that focus on risk minimization concentrate on compliance with hierarchically determined policies through vigilant inspection. Their cultures look inward and are built around the "three C's": conformity, compliance, and control.

A focus on learning maximization leads organizations to develop means to "surface" expertise embedded in their staff and in their clientele. The introduction of school advisory councils presents an excellent opportunity for schools and school systems to enhance their capacity to benefit from expertise that has, in the past, been largely unavailable to them.

The transition from organizational cultures of risk minimization to learning maximization can, however, be a difficult one. To learn is to risk prudent exploration of the unknown. And to risk prudent exploration of the unknown is to risk the possibility of failure. If failure is regarded as a terminal verdict rather than as an opportunity to inform further learning, we will cease to explore. To achieve *Quality School* improvements, we must escape this self-defeating cycle.

Building a tolerance for failure, however, does not come easily. Almost everything in our system militates against valuing unpredicted outcomes that do not result in immediate success. But until we learn that failure is synonymous with our best opportunities for learning, we will remain trapped in old and often unproductive ways of thinking and acting. We will not realize that "failures" contain the information that is essential to improvement.

As they develop, school councils will surely experience their share of successes *and* failures. It is most important that all involved remain aware that to fail to achieve objectives the first time around is only the beginning of the process of improvement. By learning to assess risk, to support prudent risk-taking, and to learn from *all* outcomes of actions taken, school advisory councils can contribute to the quality of education our schools provide.

Patience and perseverance informed by the materials and processes in this publication will help your school advisory council to create the constancy of purpose and the functional consensus needed to respond effectively to the challenge of educational improvement.

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Appendix I: Handbook Sections Relevant to School Councils

Tools to Support Group Process

Facilitating Teams and Their Work: A Process Analysis Tool Kit

[*Handbook*: 119-127]

Brainstorming
Affinity Networks
Fishbone Diagrams
Top-Down Flowcharting
Force-field Analysis
Benchmarking
Customer/Client Path Mapping

Tools for School and School System Assessment

Quality Schools Checklist — Self-Auditing for Quality

[*Handbook*: 161-174]

Understanding Quality in Educational Settings

An Invitation to Quality: Orientation and Background

[*Handbook*: 4-15]

New Patterns for Quality Leadership

Quality Through Learning, Data, and Leadership

[*Handbook*: 25-40]

Re-thinking the Educational Process

Customers, Suppliers, and Process: Three Key Concepts for Developing Quality Schools

[*Handbook*: 47-80]

Appendix II: The Quality Schools Project

The *Quality Schools Project* began through a partnership between the Department of Educational Administration of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Kodak Canada Inc. The partnership resulted in the joint sponsoring of a *Symposium on Quality Schools* in the spring of 1994 to explore how quality principles could be applied within educational settings. This four day symposium of educators, business people, and distinguished guest presenters led to the publication of *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook*. The *Handbook* translates the principles of quality management into practicable educational terms combining explanatory text, illustrative graphics, and exercises for individual and group use. It is addressed to all individuals who are actively engaged in the process of creating lasting educational improvement in classrooms, schools, and school systems.

We are now in the second phase of the project which includes the creation of *The Developing Quality Schools Network* (*DQSN*) and the translation of the *Handbook* into interactive electronic and telecommunications formats.

To obtain a copy or additional copies of *Developing Quality Schools: A Handbook*,* or to obtain further information about the *Quality Schools Project* and the *Developing Quality Schools Network*, contact:

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telephone: (416) 923-6641, ext. 2421

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*The cost per copy of the Handbook is:

Canadian orders — CAN $25.00 plus 7% GST and $5.00 shipping.

American orders — U.S. $25.00 + $5.00 shipping per copy

Orders of 10 or more copies are discounted by 10%

Orders of 35 or more copies are discounted by 20%

No charge for shipping on orders over $50.00.

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